The Holy Quran Explained in Clear English

By the scholar

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Translated by Quran Garden

Scholar Biography

Mohammad Metwali Al Sharawi was born in 1911 to a farming family in a small village in Egypt. He was well learned, and throughout his childhood and adult education he excelled in poetry and literature. His talents did not pass unnoticed by his father who wanted to send him to complete his higher education in Al Azhar, one of the most prestigious Islamic institutes at the time. Mohammad, however, had different plans in mind. He wanted to stay and help his family farm the land. Sensing his child's potential, the father kept the pressure on. In an attempt to change his father's mind, Mohammad asked him to buy all the major references in literature, culture, Arabic language, and Islamic studies. These were valuable books, and not cheap by any means. Despite the financial burden, his father came through, and bought him all the books he asked for knowing well that they were not part of Al Azhar's curriculum.

Mohamed excelled in his studies, and read far beyond what was asked of him. He enjoyed the Arabic language, poetry, and was well known for his ability to express his ideas in a clear and simple manner.

He graduated in 1943 and held several teaching jobs until he moved to Saudi Arabia in 1950 to work as a professor of religious studies in the university of Mecca. In 1963 he moved back to Egypt and held a high position at the Al Azhar. And in November of 1976 he was appointed by the Egyptian prime minister to head the ministry of religious affairs. One of his first

achievements as a government minister was to establish the first Islamic bank in Egypt.

Throughout his life Al-Sherawi was recognized with several awards including the presidential medal and two honorary Ph.D.s from top universities.

Perhaps his greatest work and most recognizable achievement was a televised Series called "Reflections upon the Quran" . The television show started to air in 1980 with the first few episodes covering his vision and method in explaining the Quran. This was followed by his reflections upon each verse of the Quran starting from the very first chapter. His TV appearance spanned over 10 years and covered more than two thirds of the Quran. His death however, prevented him from completing the entire text.

Al-Sherawi's method in explaining and reflecting upon the Quran depended on several sources. First, he relied on his thorough knowledge of the Arabic language and its intricacies. Second, He drew on his comprehensive knowledge of the entire text of the Quran, and third he focused on the social applications and everyday life lessons of the holy text. He also took special care to answer those who attacked or attempted to discredit verses of the Quran.

His ability to use clear and simple examples and to illustrate deep philosophical issues in an easy to understand manner helped him reach vast audiences of different social and educational backgrounds. His TV series reruns on many television channels to this day. It is this ability to reach the masses over decades is what we will try to tap into.

Al-Sherawi passed away in the summer of 1998. His funeral was broadcast live and attended by tens of thousands of admirers.

This work is a direct adaptation of his TV series. For our purposes, many English translations of the meaning of the Quran were considered. While no single translation can capture the true essence and beauty of the Quran, we found that more can be gained, and less will be lost, by looking at multiple translations simultaneously.

Introduction to the Quran

All thanks are due to God lord of creation, and his blessings may be on the prophet Mohammed and his family. I have been known among my peers regarding my reflections upon the Quran. These reflections are not meant to explain the Quran. Rather they are a collection of moments of clarity that a believer might have regarding a verse or few verses of the Quran.

If the Quran were to be fully explained, then the Prophet Mohammad would have been the foremost authority to explain it because it was revealed to him. However, the Prophet explained to his companions what was appropriate for their time. He clarified all the responsibilities, duties, and rights of a Muslim that result in reward if properly carried out or punishment if mishandled. So all the believers, since the time of the prophet, had equal and clear access to this knowledge. However, when it came to all the other matters regarding the creation, and the secrets and treasures of the Quran, the prophet shared from his knowledge as much as the minds of his time could comprehend and value.

The purpose of the revelation of the Quran was not to reveal scientific explorations or to explain the secrets of creation. These matters remain hidden in its verses and are revealed in their proper time. It is when the scientific minds are active in search and study of such areas that God makes these verses shine with their true meaning. This makes each scientific revelation in the Quran more appropriate for its time and more impactful as it is

delivered when the scientific minds are ready for it. The prophet left the explanation of the Quran, which is not related to matters of duties and religious law, to be revealed by time.

The Quran is God's words, and God calls its verses آياتwhich -in the Arabic language- mean "signs". It is the same word "آيات" that God uses to describe his creation in the universe (such as the sun, stars, life in all its forms and so on). God Almighty Says:

"In the creation of heavens and Earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ships which sail the seas to people's benefit, and the water which God sends down from the sky-by which He brings the Earth to life when it was dead and scatters about in it creatures of every kind-and the varying direction of the winds, and the clouds subservient between heaven and Earth, there are Signs for people who use their intellect. (Chapter 2: Verse 164)

So these signs are present both in God's creation and in his book - the Quran- and with time one will explain and compliment the other.

Now, let's look into the meaning of the word Quran. In the Arabic language "Quran" is derived from the verb "read". It means "the read" or "the recited". The use of the word "Quran" is restricted to God's revelation to his Prophet Mohammad for the purpose of guidance and proof. God also refers to the Quran as "the book". The Quran is always preserved in the minds of those who memorize it, and on the pages of the holy text. So when relating to the revelation in its read form it is called the "Quran", and when relating to it in its written form it's

called "the book".

Historically, as the Quran was being collected and written down in its book form, two rules were implemented for writing down each verse: the first rule required that two people who have memorized the verse be present, and the second rule required that the verse was also found written down by one of the prophet's companions. These two conditions were met for each and every verse in the Quran except for one. This one verse was found written down, however it was only memorized by one companion. So according to the rules, this verse should have been excluded from the book.

But here comes an incident that shows the wisdom and mercy of God Almighty. This particular verse was memorized by a man named Khuzaima (خزيمة), and no one else. The scribe who was writing down the Quran remembered that the prophet peace be upon him said "Whomever Khuzaima testified for, it should suffice". The prophet had given Khuzaima's testimony the weight of two testimonies. This was based on an event that happened while the prophet peace be upon him was alive. The prophet had borrowed money from a man, and then repaid him the debt. After some time the man came back to the prophet asking for his money back. The prophet told the man that he had already repaid him the debt in full. So this man asked the prophet to bring forward a witness that saw the transaction. However, no one was with a prophet at the time he repaid the debt. This is when Khuzayma came forward and said "I was present when the prophet repaid you the money". After the man left, the prophet turned to Khuzayma and said “I know you were not present when I repaid my debt, no

one was there. how could you say that you were with me?”. Khuzayma looked at the prophet and said "How can I believe you in all the Revelations you brought from the heavens, and then disbelieve you about a few coins". Khuzayma, through his wisdom, saw that the prophet who is the most honest and truthful man he knew, could not be dishonest about a small worldly matter when he was honest in delivering God's message. When the prophet saw Khuzayma's deep understanding and belief, he was very pleased and said "whomever Khuzaima testified for, it should suffice".

Now that we know how the Quran came to be written. Let's take some time to define the Quran. If one was to give the most complete and accurate definition of the Quran, one would say "The Quran is" and then would recite the Quran from the very first verse until the very last one. Here is the short definition of the Quran given by the scholars: the Quran is the words of God that were revealed to the prophet Muhammad for the purpose of guidance and as a proof of his message.

In some sense, the Quran resembles all the holy books that were revealed previously, such as the Torah and the bible. These books were revealed for the purpose of guidance and to clarify God's message. The Quran on the other hand, carries two purposes: the first is to offer guidance and to clarify God's message, and the second is to be a lasting Miracle and proof of the prophet's message. The Torah delivered God's message and set of laws, while Moses' staff was his miracle. The bible was the book of guidance of prophet Jesus. Jesus' healing of the blind and the sick was his miracle. The Quran combined both the message of God and the miracle of

prophet Muhammad.

You may ask: why does this difference exist in the revelations? It is because God's previous messages were meant for a certain period of time, and meant for a specific people; the message of the Quran, on the other hand, is meant for all humanity and all time until the day of judgment. Therefore, its miracle should be ever present. Any of the prophet's followers should be able to say -at any point in time- that Mohammed was the messenger of God and this here is his miracle. One might say that Jesus is the prophet of God, however, he or she cannot point and say this here is his miracle. The miracles of the previous prophets were like a flame that lit brightly. Whoever saw that flame, witnessed the miracle. Once the flame extinguished, its power and light could only be transferred by storytelling. We believe in all these miracles because they're mentioned the Quran, however, none of us and none of the prophet's companions saw these miracles firsthand. Since the miracle of the Quran is to last through the end of time, then it's revelations should continue till the end of time. It is the gift that keeps on giving and continues to shine through the ages. This requires that not all parts of the Quran be explained at the time of the prophet. God says in the Quran:

“We will show them our signs on the horizon and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth” (41:53)

The word “It” in this verse eludes to the Quran. So scientific discoveries will come and continue to come to prove that the Quran is the truth.

Let's look at the Quran from a literature point of view.

God wanted the Quran to be a miracle and a proof. It was sent as challenge for the nonbelievers; and If you want to challenge someone to prove superiority, you must challenge them in something they excel at. You cannot challenge a weak or disabled person in weightlifting - that will prove nothing-. You have to challenge a weightlifter. So when the Quran came and challenged the Arabs in their own language and prevailed, it did not mean that the Arabs at that time were weak in the language arts. To the contrary, it is a testimony that they excelled and mastered their language at a high - Shakespearean- level. So, when the Quran prevailed over them linguistically, it became a true triumph.

The Arabs at the time of the prophet, especially in the vicinity of Mecca, excelled in language arts. From poetry to storytelling and literature, they used to attract the best of the best. Fame and fortune came to those who mastered literature. So, Where did Mohammad – a resident of Mecca- stand among these poets and literature elites? Mohammad lived among Meccans for 40 years before he received the Quran and the message of Islam. During that time he was virtually unknown in the circles of poetry and language arts. when the Quran was revealed to the prophet, God wanted it to be a literary work and a linguistic challenge that came from a person who was not known to have any of these fine skills. Meccans had to know that this speech did not come from Muhammad. After all, the talent and genius of a person typically appears in their twenties or early

thirties, talents do not manifest in the person's forties and fifties.

Mohammad at the age of 40 was illiterate, he did not know how to write and had not composed any poetry. When, all of a sudden, he started reciting verses of the Quran that were revered by the elites of the poets and the masters of the language of his time, the question was: where did all of this come from? It didn't make any sense that he had this talent all along, kept it to himself until he was 40, and then decided to use it. If he had this talent, He could have used it to gain status in his community. More importantly, he could not have known that he would live to be 40 in a society where many people died young. This had to mean that he never possessed this ability, rather the holy text was revealed to him.

God teaches the prophet to address this issue with the non-believers in the following verse

"Say: "Had God so wished, I would not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you. I lived among you for many years before it came. Will you not use your intellect?" ” (Chapter 10: Verse16)

Moreover, Who would refuse to take the credit for such a great piece of work? The prophet was offered all the credit for the Quran and all the Glory that would come with it, but he declined as mentioned in the following verse:

"When Our Clear Signs are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us say, "Bring a Qur'an other than this one or change it." Say: "It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow nothing

except what is revealed to me. I fear, were I to disobey my Lord, the punishment of a Dreadful Day."(10:15)

People love to take credit for things they have done and many even claim credit for things that they have not done. Here the prophet was offered credit, and said no, this is not from me.

The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always welcomed questions from believers and nonbelievers alike. However, if you research the companions of the prophet, you will notice that none had asked him about verses in the Quran that did not carry any clear meaning to such as the verse (ألف لام ميم)ALM or (حا ميم) HM. Perhaps More interestingly, none of the nonbelievers - who came to the prophet with the purpose of debating and proving that his holy book was nonsense- questioned these verses. How could the non-believers -despite their deep knowledge of the Arabic language- have missed such an opportunity to attack the prophet? This cannot be unless deep down they understood the value of such speech. Even though they did not believe in the Quran, they did not find fault in these verses to use against the prophet. Moreover, when the nonbelievers returned to their tribes, they instructed their followers not to listen to the Quran. They knew that those who truly listened will find sweetness in its words and experience its influence in their hearts and minds. If they truly believed that the Quran was worthless, they wouldn't mind who listened and who did not. The leaders of the nonbelievers took it a step further. They asked their followers to distract from the Quran while it was read. They understood that the Quran has true substance and deep influence. God

Almighty says:

And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Quran and do make a noise in the midst of its reading that you may overcome it." (41:26)

Now, let's take a look at the different types of speech the prophet relayed to us:

First there's the Quran; Second there are the prophet's narrations (hadeeth), and finally there are the holy or sacred narrations (which is God's speech that is not part of the Quran). All these types of speech came to us from the prophet, but each carried a very distinct literature style. In the same day, the prophet would relay a narration that is part of the Quran and another that would fall under hadeeth, and so on. Even the most talented of writers and poets throughout the ages have a distinct personal style spanning all their work. If the prophet was writing these narrations, then his style will creep up into all parts of speech regardless of how hard he tried to mask it. This is just another piece of evidence that it is from God and not from the prophet.

It is no surprise then that when God sent the message to the prophet, it caused bewilderment and turmoil among the nonbelievers. They wanted to discredit the Quran and the new message but did not know how. On some occasions, they accused the prophet of sorcery and said that he was a magician, to which we say, if he was such a brilliant magician how come he could not charm you? How come he could not affect you with his magic like he affected the others who believed in him. The fact that you are disbelieving, is in by itself a proof that he's not a magician.

On other occasions the nonbelievers tried to claim that the prophet was insane, and what he said was just crazy talk. So, to answer that charge, let's take a minute and a define insanity: "it is for one to behave in a manner that does not make sense". An insane person acts irrationally and inappropriately in social situation. However, the prophet was well known in the entire community of Mecca for his great character and impeccable manners. Having good character and good manners -in essence behaving most properly- is the exact opposite of being insane. Having manners means that one acts appropriately and responds well to social situations. This was addressed by God in the following verses to answer those who alleged the prophet's insanity

"By the blessings of your Lord, you are not mad. You will have a wage which never-fails. Indeed you are truly vast in character".(68:2-4)

Ironically, even while the disbelievers were trying to discredit the prophet and his message and accuse him of insanity, they used to trust him with their valuables when they traveled. He was one of a few people in Mecca, in which Meccans trusted to leave their wealth and valuables with when they traveled. When things truly mattered to them, when it concerned them at a personal level, they trusted this man.

The truth is, the disbelievers did not distrust the prophet as a person, nor did they dislike the Quran. What they truly hated was the fact that such great work was not revealed to them, the elites. They could not stand that the message was revealed to someone else, an ordinary person not from their ranks. Their hate and foolishness is

shown clearly in what they said in this verse:

“And they say, 'God, if this is really the truth from You, *rain down stones* on us out of *heaven* or send a painful *punishment* down on us. “ (8:32)

An intelligent sincere person would have said "God if this is a truth from you then please guide me to it". Instead what they said was that if this is the truth: we would rather die than follow this man.

And in another verse in the Quran:

"They say, 'Why was this Qur'an not *sent down to one of the great men* of the two cities?” (43:31)

They did not object to the Quran itself. They did not object to the message of the Quran. What the non-believers were most concerned with was the superficial issue of who the Quran was revealed to. They left behind the core of the matter, the true message.

Let's talk about revelation. Since God cannot be seen or heard, and because the nature and built of a human being can not receive directly from God, his message has to be delivered through revelation.

But what is the meaning of revelation? Revelation is to inform someone secretly or quietly. When someone like a salesman comes to your door and you don't have the time to meet with them, you might motion to a family member to let that person go. In essence, you have informed your family member quietly that you did not want to see that person, and revealed your wishes to them.

There are many forms of Revelations that were mentioned in the Quran. God has revealed to the angels, he also revealed to people other than prophets such as the mother of Moses, and to many of his creation as stated in this verse:

“Your Lord revealed to the bees: ‘Build dwellings in the mountains and the trees, and also in the structures which men erect. “(Chapter 16: Verse 68)

Furthermore, the devils have revealed to each other and to human beings.

However when the word revelation is used, it usually takes the specific meaning of God revealing his message to his prophets. There are three forms that revelation may take as mentioned in the following verse:

“It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with God's permission, what God wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise. “ (42:51)

Let's take these forms one by one.

First: Inspiration. When God inspires someone, he throws the idea into the person's heart, the person would then act on it. However, as we know there are many ideas that pop into one's head, or are felt in one's heart. How do we know which one of them is true revelation?

When true inspiration comes from God to a person, the person finds him or herself completely content and at peace with that thought. A person would act on it without experiencing any objection or self-doubt. Even if

such inspiration calls for an action that is typically against the thoughtful mind. Let's take an example of this type of revelation from the Quran:

“We revealed to Moses' mother, ‘Suckle him and then when you fear for him cast him into the sea. Do not fear or grieve; We will return him to you and make him one of the Messengers.’ “ (28:7)

What woman -in her right mind- would throw her baby into the sea when she fears most for his life? She would basically be throwing her baby from grave danger into certain death. Yet Moses' mother felt completely at peace with this action when she was inspired by God.

Second: Revelation from behind a veil. Every major religion, be it Judaism Christianity or Islam, had its message delivered partly by this method, for example when the prophet was commanded to start the five daily prayers, God spoke to him from behind a veil, the same way he spoke to Moses previously.

and third: revelation through a messenger sent from God. The Quran was exclusively revealed by sending a direct messenger which was the angel Gabriel. The Quran was not revealed by inspiration to the prophet, nor was it though direct speech by God behind a veil. The Quran was delivered solely by the angel messenger, so there would be absolutely no doubt of its origin. The prophet used to hear a loud noise like the tolling of a bell before the angel Gabriel would come and become visible to him. The presence of the angel would take a heavy toll on the prophet; his face would change color.... if he was sitting next to one of his companions or resting his leg on them, that person would feel the prophet's leg get so

heavy... they would describe it as a boulder. If he was riding on a horse or on a camel, the animal would labor from feeling such intense weight.

Initially, these stressful encounters took their toll on the prophet (peace be upon him). Then, after the first few Revelations of verses, there was a period of pause and the angel did not return to the prophet for a while. During that time the prophet started to miss and long for receiving Revelations from God. Usually when you miss something, or when you do hard work and then take a period of rest you might start longing for the sweetness of hard work and achievement. This feeling makes the work easier for you when you return. You actually start looking forward to it. When you miss the pleasures you get from it, you can overcome the hard parts easily. God says in Chapter 94:

Have We not comforted your heart; Relieved you of the burden which had been a heavy weight upon your back and granted you an exalted reputation? So truly where there is hardship there is also ease; truly where there is hardship there is also ease. (94:1-6)

Let's take note of yet another proof of the truthfulness of the message of the Quran. At times the prophet would receive a long chapter from the Quran in one meeting with the angel Gabriel. When the revelation session was over, the prophet would recite the new verses to his companions, who in turn would write them down. The new verses maybe long and may take 30 minutes or an hour to recite as the companions wrote them down; and then when the time for the next prayer comes, the prophet would recite the same verses verbatim as he lead

the prayers. Anyone of us can speak for 30 minutes to an hour and ask others to record our speech. However, none can repeat their speech word for word and letter for letter an hour later. The fact that the prophet used to do exactly that is evidence that this was revealed to him and ingrained into his memory through a higher power.

There are verses of the Quran which are very similar to each other, there are even a few verses that differ by one letter only, which makes it clear that the prophet was not reciting casual speech or conveying a general meaning. He recited and repeated verses that were very specific and very difficult to memorize. It is not a matter of routine, and not a specific style in writing, the prophet had nothing to do with it. It is simply an issue of revelation as mentioned in the Quran:

“and neither does he speak out of his own desire: The Quran is nothing less than a revelation that is sent to him.” (53:3-4)

I seek refuge in God

I seek refuge in God from Satan the accursed.

When you begin reading the Quran, God wants the initial meeting point between you and him to be under his care and protection. He states:

Whenever you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan (Chapter 16: Verse 98)

This is because as you direct yourself to the creator and seek refuge in Him, you become stronger despite your weakness; and as long as God is with you, your ability and power is above all abilities and powers. Keep in mind that many of the distractions that occupy your mind while you read the Quran are the work of Satan. Thus, when you begin reciting the Quran, it is vital that you fine-tune your attention and direct your consciousness to receive God's words properly.

Satan always comes to the believer from his weak side in order to lead him astray. If Satan finds a person rigorous in a particular act, he comes to him from another direction. For example, if a believer is careful in prayers, offering them properly in their appointed time, then Satan will attempt to sway him regarding wealth. He whispers to him the fantasy of a richer and safer future if he does not pay zakat (the obligatory alms) to the poor; while this in reality is a lie. In fact, charity instills God's blessings and protection in our wealth. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told us: "Never has the wealth of a person decreased due to charity". The devil exploits people's greed and negligence of this fact by driving them towards earning unlawful money and not paying Zakat on what they have lawfully earned. Likewise, if a person is rigorous regarding wealth, then the devil may tempt him or her to indulge in adultery. And if Satan

finds a person abstaining from all of these immoral acts, he turns him or her to the allure of drinking, bad company or slandering. He keeps revolving around the person's weaknesses until he manages to drag him or her into committing sin. For this reason, you should seek refuge in God, so he may strengthen your weak points and protect your vulnerabilities. When you ask for God's company and protection before you recite the Quran, God prevents Satan from approaching and distracting you. Only then will the Quran truly become your means of guidance and enlightenment.

While the merits of the Quran are equally available to everyone, each person reaps from them according to the strength of his or her faith. Here, you may ask: Doesn't everyone who reads or listens to the Quran benefit equally? The answer is: No, as God states in this verse:

Among them are those who listen to you and then, when they leave your presence, say to those who have been given knowledge, 'What was that he just said?' They are those whose hearts God has sealed up and who follow their own desires (47:16)

Meaning, the Quran did not have any effect on them. On the other hand, it certainly has a positive effect on the believers who listen attentively as mentioned in this verse:

And if we had made it a Qur'an in a foreign tongue, they, surely, would have said, `Why have not its verses been made clear? What ! a foreign tongue and an Arab Prophet?' Say, `It is a guidance and a healing for those who believe.' But as to those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears and to

them it is blindness. They are, as it were, being called from a far-off place (41:44)

As you can see, the most important element in reaping the benefits of the Quran is the state of mind and faith of the person reading or listening to it. For this reason, God wants you to purify and distance yourself from Satan when you recite the Quran before Satan manages to distract you from God's verses. And while you cannot see Satan, and you might not even be aware of his presence, he can see us as mentioned in the following verse:

O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe (7:27)

Therefore, we should seek refuge and protection in a power that has the ability to see and overpower Satan. Only then will Quran's verses penetrate into the heart.

God had expelled the devil Satan from his mercy making him accursed and destined to hellfire. This was because Satan had committed his sin when he denied God's command to prostrate before Adam. His disobedience had reached its height not only because he disobeyed a direct order from God, but also because he questioned God's wisdom as stated in this verse:

God said, 'What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you to?' He replied, 'I am better than him. You created me from fire and You created

him from clay.' (7:12)

It is as though Satan was not pleased with God's judgment, and intended to be equal to Him. It was this defiance and arrogance that resulted in God banishing him from His mercy. Satan believes that Adam was the reason for his predicament, so he set his goal to deviate not only Adam but entire mankind into hellfire.

Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) lived in paradise and had readily available to them all their daily needs without any work or effort. Paradise was rich in trees and luxuries providing Adam and his wife with every fruit. They were permitted to eat from whatever they wished, except for one tree, the fruit of which was forbidden. Satan began to allure them towards sin by persuading them that by not eating from this tree they will be deprived of great benefits as mentioned in this verse:

Satan whispered to them so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them: he said, 'Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals,'(7:20)

and in another chapter the Quran states:

But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, "O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?" (20:120)

In order to trick Adam and Eve, Satan exploited their reverence for God and swore by God's honor to gain their trust as stated in this verse:

Then he said to them on oath: "I am your sincere friend;" (7:21)

Through these examples, you can appreciate how Satan approaches us from many different angles. He approached Adam and Eve trying to convince them that whoever eats from this tree will become an angel or become immortal or will be granted an everlasting kingdom. Satan depicts for us that there is good in what God has prohibited, and if we just disobey the creator, we will acquire wealth and power. Adam and Eve ate from the tree, but they did not become immortal nor did they attain any lasting kingdom. On the contrary, their private parts became manifest to them. They understood that God only intended good for them by making the fruit of this tree unlawful. Had Adam and Eve thought rationally, they would have realized that Satan's temptations were false. If this tree had the ability to make the eater immortal, then why did Satan feel the need to ask God to grant him life till the day of resurrection? He could have simply eaten from this tree.

Likewise, we should always keep in mind the animosity between Satan and Adam; and we should remember that Satan asked God to keep him alive until the last day so he can take revenge from Adam and entire mankind by deviating them towards sin. Only when we remain cautious and seek refuge in God would Satan fail and his whispers become exposed.

God Almighty gave us the freedom of choice in faith and belief. He showed us the path of guidance and the path of disobedience, and highlighted the consequences of each path. God, however, limited our freedom of choice to a particular period of time which is our life in this

world. When we die, we lose this freedom and face the fruits of our labor. God says:

Say, 'Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so.' We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers that will envelop them from all sides. If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces. What a terrible drink! What a painful resting place (Chapter 18, Verse 29)

Furthermore, if God had wanted, he could have made all His creation rightly guided as stated in this verse:

If We will, We can send down a compelling sign on them from heaven, so that they are forced to bow their necks before it in humility (26:4)

Satan continually attempts to prevent us from making the right choice. And in order to protect ourselves from his whispers, it is essential that we learn how he approaches us; as the ancient proverb says (Know thy enemy and know yourself). The Quran explained clearly *where* and *how* Satan attempts to entice human beings:

Let's start with this verse that highlights the "Where":

He said, 'By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. (7:16)

Satan does not bother with seducing people who are already in sin. Therefore, he does not go to bars and casinos. Instead, he targets people in places of righteousness and worship and makes every effort to sway those who are committed to the truth. Note that

Satan did not say "I will sit waiting for them on the misleading path", since the misleading path naturally leads to him. He targets those who are on the straight path and lures them towards defiance.

Now let’s look at this next verse as it highlights “how” Satan approaches us:

Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful.’ (7:17)

The four directions of temptation from which Satan approaches people on the right path are: 'from before them', 'from behind them' 'from their right' and lastly 'from their left'. However, as you are aware, there are six directions not four. So what are the two directions from which Satan does not approach? They are 'from above' and 'from below'. Satan is aware that the upper direction represents divine superiority, while the lower direction represents human submission and connection to God at the time of prostration. Thus, when a person is truly connected to the creator, Satan has no access to him or her.

Ironically, if you closely examine the advocates of atheism in every era, you will find that they come from the same directions as Satan. And true believers do not belong to any of these paths. They are not progressives who call towards immorality and dissolution of values. Nor traditionalist who say ‘we want to live in the past and only follow what we found our fatherson’. Nor are they leftists who deny religion and advocate disbelief,nor rightists who believe in pure capitalism and the exploitation of people and resources. True Believers are

superior as all their affairs are from God and they only submit to him. And as long as their way of life is according to God, they will not have to follow any manmade system, or anyone who is equivalent to them. That is the way to gain honor and guard ourselves from humiliation, and exploitation. God says in the Quran:

They say: "If we returned to the city, the more dignified will exile the most humiliated" And to God is the glory, and to His messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know. (63:8)

On the other hand, if you do not follow God's path, then you have to follow a manmade system. Keep in mind that every person has desires that he or she wants fulfilled, whether to gain fame, status or material goods. Therefore, when a person, or a group of people, constructs a social system or a way of life, the resulting laws are skewed towards self-benefit, and fulfillment of these desires. More often than not, and despite good intentions, such systems only benefit a group of elites who become indulgent and self-serving. In contrast, God is the creator of all things, and he is the source of all good. He does not need what you and I own or what anyone has to offer. So when God proposes a way of life and governance, it is not for his own gain or benefit, rather it is for our own best interest. God does not need or take anything from us; rather He continually provides for us, honors and elevates us.

Now that you know how and where Satan approaches you. Let's look into the best way to guard and protect yourself. Satan is a creation of God and so is the believer. It is logical then that in a struggle between two

of God’s creations, the most powerful and persistent of the two will win. But if one of the two happens to be in God’s company, then no one can ever overcome him or her. This is why God wants you to seek refuge in Him so you can be in his company against Satan. This principle is also true in the case of a struggle between the believers and non-believers. As long as the believers adhere to the truth, the non-believers can never defeat them. But if they deviate from God’s path and follow their own desires, then the disbelievers can overcome them, because the struggle, in this case, will be between two parties detached from God. On the other hand, if both parties adhere to God then they certainly would not fight each other in the first place.

Satan is unrelenting in his attempts to deceive humans because he does not want to be the only sinner. He disobeyed and was expelled from God's mercy.........why can't others be sinners like him? and since the reason for his disobedience was not prostrating before Adam......why not take revenge from the children of Adam and their father by misleading them?

Here you may question the fact that both Adam and Satan disobeyed God, So why was it that God expelled Satan from His mercy, while he forgave Adam? The answer lies in the fundamental difference between the two sins. The sin of Satan had reached the height of disobedience as he denied a direct command from God and then went a step further by rejecting the commander. He said: "Never will I prostrate nor would I obey you because I have been created from fire while he has been created from clay." Adam, on the other hand, acknowledged his shortcomings and said: "God

Almighty, your command is the truth, your word is the truth and your path is the truth, but I was weak and unable to bring myself to carry your order. So, God, pardon me my weakness". Thus, God forgave him and taught him the words and rewards of repentance.

God Almighty Says:

Satan is certainly your enemy, so hold him as a foe. He only calls his faction to be the residents of Hell (Chapter 35: Verse 6)

Despite God repeated warnings, we are often careless in taking any precautions. Keep in mind that Satan does not possess the authority to compel any person to do what he or she does not want. Neither does he have the power to make one feel comfortable with any sin. In fact, Satan does not have any power or authority over any human being. Authority is of two types: first, forcing one to do an act he or she does not want to do, this is known as the power of compulsion. Second, convincing a person to voluntarily do an act while he or she is content; this is known as the power of persuasion. Satan does not have the authority of compulsion nor the power of persuasion. Sadly, the whisper of Satan often finds an inclination and a desire within ourselves and thus we lend it an attentive ear and pursue it. However, we should always keep in mind the end result of this struggle. As the following verse details, Satan will address his followers on the Day of Resurrection:

When everything has been decided, Satan will say, 'God gave you a true promise. I too made promises but they were false ones: I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so

do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with God before.' A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers, (14:22)

Here, you may wonder: Why did God create Satan and gave him the ability to entice humans? The answer is that if obedience existed without any obstacles or temptations, then one's true faith and commitment will not become clear. Just like the honesty of an employee cannot be judged unless he or she is tempted by a bribe, or by an unattended cash register. If the employee is not exposed to temptation, his or her values will not be known. But if he or she is confronted by temptation and decides to hold to duty and principle, then this person is certainly an honest employee.

Similarly, God gave us the freedom of choice between the principles of truth, and those of corruption to make it known those who believe and follow His path while having the choice to do otherwise. Most of God's creations are compelled to follow instinct and unconsciously perform their duty in this world. This compulsion over creation proves the attributes of subjugation and grandeur for God Almighty. God, however, wants us to turn to Him out of love, not compulsion. This love can only come from free will and the freedom of choice. This love can be the result of your desire to attain paradise. And God will certainly grant you what you desire. At yet at a higher level, this love can be pure for God alone, and not for desire of any reward. That is how some scholars interpret the following verse:

Say: ‘I am only a human being like yourselves who has received revelation. Your god is One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.’(18:110)

The phrase: "He who hopes to meet his Lord" refers to those who do good deeds purely for the pleasure of God's company on the Day of Resurrection. So if you do good deeds to attain paradise, you will get paradise, and if you aim far higher, you will also get what you had aimed for.

Had God not created paradise and hell, wouldn’t He be worthy of being worshiped?! العدويةرابعة -a pious Muslim woman from the 2nd century after the prophet- was quoted saying: "O God, if you know that I am worshiping you out of greed for paradise then deprive me of it, and if you know that I am worshiping you out of fear of hellfire then admit me into it, for I am only worshiping you because you deserve to be worshipped."

So God wants you to purify yourself for him, and seek refuge in his company when you recite the Quran. He knows that Satan whispers to distract you and prevent you from reaping the benefits of the Quran. If you want to attain the full benefits and virtues of God's words, then seek refuge in him and be in his company.

Listen to what الصادقجعفر -a great grandson of the prophet Muhammad and one of the most knowledgeable scholars of the virtues of the Quran said: "Indeed the horrors of life for man are fear, adversity, distress, and being conspired against ". He continued: "I am astonished by a person who is in fear but does not resort to the words of God in this verse: **"God is sufficient for**

us, and the best of protectors,"(3:173) for God has said in the verse right after that:**"Hence they returned with a mighty blessing from God and a great bounty. They suffered no harm whatsoever, and they followed the good pleasure of God. Indeed, God is the Possessor of great bounty" (3:174)..** And I am amazed at a person inflicted by adversity and yet he does not resort to the following words of God: **" Indeed, adversity has touched me, and You are the Most Merciful of all who show mercy."(21:83)** For God Almighty has said in reply: **"We responded to him and removed from him the harm which was afflicting him" (21:84)**. Furthermore, I am astonished at a person stricken by distress and yet he does not say the following words from the Quran: **'There is no God but You! Glory be to You! Truly I have been one of the wrongdoers.'(21:87)**. For I heard God say in response: "**So we heard his prayer and delivered him from his distress. And Thus do we deliver true believers."(21:88).** And I am amazed by a person who is conspired against and does not resort to the following words: **"I entrust my affairs to God. Indeed God is all-Seeing of His servants"(40:44)** . For I have heard God Almighty say in the very next verse: **"So God safeguarded him from the evil things they plotted" (40:45).**

As long as you remain in God's company, Satan does not dare approach you. On the day of migration to Medina, the Prophet (peace be upon him) retreated to the cave of) with his companion Abu Bakr, while the ثور(disbelievers were on the hunt for them. Following their trace, the armed men reached the cave and stood at its

entrance. At that moment Abu Bakr said to the prophet "If any of them just glances at his feet, he would spot us". The Prophet replied: "what do you think about two people when God is the third of them". This incident is summarized in the following verse:

Even if you do not help the Prophet, God helped him when the disbelievers drove him out: when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, 'Do not worry, God is with us,' and God sent His calm down to him, aided him with forces invisible to you, and brought down the disbelievers' plan. God's plan is higher: God is almighty and wise.(9:40)

Human eyes cannot comprehend God, and since the Prophet and his companion were in the company of God, then the eyes of the disbelievers would not comprehend them either. Looking at the prophet and Abu Bakr at that moment would be just like looking into thin air.

Finally, and before we move to the first chapter and the first verse of the Quran, let's take a moment to examine where God chose to put his message. God's message for humanity came from an illiterate nation. Moreover, God selected an illiterate man from this nation to deliver the message. Prophet Muhammad did not acquire any formal education or schooling in Mecca. Neither was he educated at the hands of the people of the great powers of the east or west. While illiteracy may bring shame on a person, Illiteracy was an honor for the Prophet, because it confirmed that whatever he brought us of religion was only from God. Everything that he delivered is a miracle because it was great knowledge and wisdom from an unlearned man. If the Quran had descended upon a

civilized nation of the time, such as the Persians or the Romans, or upon a literate highly educated person, it would have been said that 'the Quran is the outcome of the concurrence and rise of civilizations, a renaissance of reason or reformations'. It is God's wisdom to put his message upon an illiterate nation and an illiterate Prophet confirming its unique and direct connection to the heavens free of any claim to human or cultural influence. Prophet Muhammad, an illiterate person, through God's bounty, became a teacher for entire mankind.